

The Editor:

In the August issue of CANADIAN AVIATION, page 37, there is mention by Mr. C. J. Toms of an article on "Aviation" in Volume I of the ENCYCLOPEDIA OF CANADA, published by University Associates of Canada Ltd., Toronto, in 1948. The General Editor is given as W. Stewart Wallace. In the list of contributors this article is attributed to me.

As I had never previously heard of this publication and had no recollection of ever communicating with its editor, I was curious to see what material of mine had been used and how it had been handled, a natural curiosity in view of the fact that during the past 30 years I have supplied innumerable writers with facts and statistics relating to aviation in Canada. I have also delivered hundreds of broadcasts and talks to service clubs and similar organizations on this subject and have written articles on it for leading Canadian and British periodicals.

It was therefore with considerable surprise that I noted in the article attributed to me the statement, in the first paragraph, that J. A. D. McCurdy's flight at Baddeck, N.S. on Feb. 23, 1909 was "the first flight anywhere in the British Empire."

As I have noted this statement repeated in the press and over the radio during the past, I wish to deny most emphatically that it was ever made by me, in writing or otherwise.

Reliable authorities, including the Royal Aero Club of the United Kingdom, which is supposed to keep official records, agree that the first official flight in the British Empire was made by S. F. Cody at Farnborough, Hampshire, England, on October 5, 1908. Cody had also made previous flights which were witnessed on May 16 and September 29, 1908. At that time Cody was an American citizen but became a naturalized Englishman in 1909.

(There were others in England and Scotland who had made short hops or flights, but these have not been "officially" recognized.)

In the same paragraph there is also a reference to the flight made by the late F. W. (Casey) Baldwin at Hammondsport, N.Y., on March 12, 1908. It is stated that in making this flight "he became the seventh man in the world to fly a heavier-than-air machine." This may be true but again I must dissociate myself from this statement which beclouds the much more pertinent fact that by making this flight F. W. Baldwin became the **first Canadian and/or British subject** to fly a heavier-than-air machine, even though the flight was made in the United States.

My interest in these matters goes back to 1915 when I joined the Sopwith Aviation Company and had the opportunity to meet at Brooklands some of the pioneer pilots.

After checking the evidence which I have been able to obtain it would appear that certain substantiated facts regarding F. W. Baldwin's flight have been overlooked by the Royal Aero Club in compiling their records. In the interests of historical accuracy I submit that the honours, which are outstanding in each case, are as follows:

1. S. F. Cody was **the first man to fly** a heavier-than-air machine **in the British Empire**. This was at Farnborough, England, officially on October 5, 1908, unofficially on May 16 and September 29, 1908.
2. F. W. Baldwin was the **first Canadian and/or British subject to fly** a heavier-than-air machine. He flew the "Red Wing" at Lake Keuka, Hammondsport, N.Y. on March 12, 1908.
3. J. A. D. McCurdy was the **first man to fly** a heavier-than-air machine **in Canada**. This was at Baddeck, N.S., in February 23, 1909.

W. B. BURCHALL,
Ottawa, Ontario.

Who Flew First In

ALIOT VERDON ROE began construction of his first plane in 1906. The machine was a biplane, with a large front elevator, and was powered with a 28-hp Antoinette engine when he made his first hop.

His first flight took place on June 8, 1903, at the Brooklands race track, near London. The distance covered was approximately 75 to 150 feet. This flight was witnessed, and signed statements were obtained from the track's head carpenter and the park-keeper, who both saw the flight, also one other person who was with them at the time, and they were the ones who stated the flight was between 75 and 150 feet.

On June 8, 1928, twenty years later, the Royal Aero Club; the Aeronautical Society; and the Air League of the British Empire, gave a banquet to honor A. V. Roe, which was held at the Savoy Hotel, the object being to recognize him as the first person to make a flight in an aeroplane in England. (Note the date was June 8, 1908, on which the flight was made.)

The banquet started a controversy as to who first flew in England and a committee was formed by the Royal Aero Club. It was decided that the first official flight by a British subject had been made by another, nearly a year later (Moore-

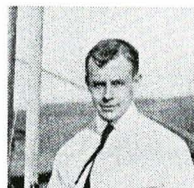
Brabazon). Mr. A. V. Roe, to satisfy himself that he had flown, got the Stress Department of Saunders-Roe Ltd. to work out what distance would constitute a flight by his first machine and without being in any way favorable, it was decided that the machine could not do even 75 feet without having flown.

When the British pilot, J. T. C. Moore-Brabazon, made his flight at the Isle of Sheppey in May, 1909, he had official observers present, and that is why his flight was given official recognition as the first controlled flight in Great Britain.

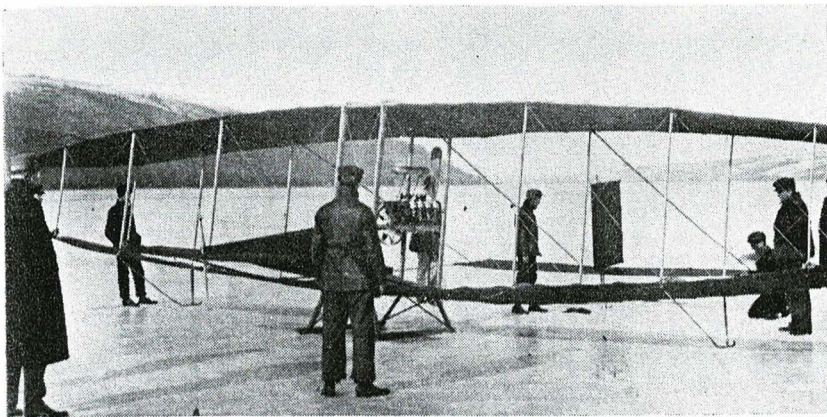
Although A. V. Roe's flight is recognized by the British Aero



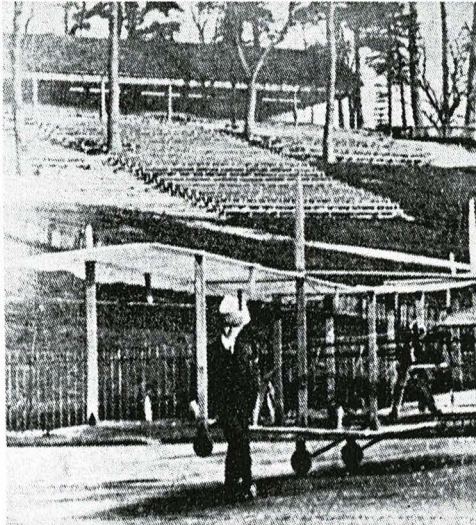
A. V. ROE, a British subject, was the first person to fly an airplane at any point in the British Empire, as his flight was witnessed at Brooklands, near London, England, on June 8, 1908. (It cannot be classed, however, as a controlled flight in the strict sense of manoeuvrability, as it was distinctly a straight flight.)



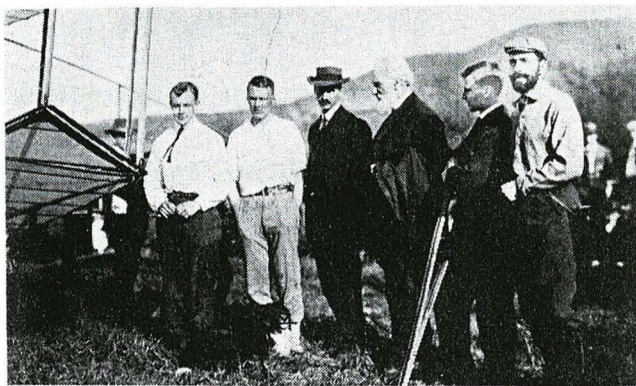
F. W. BALDWIN, Canadian, was the first British subject to fly an airplane, doing so at Lake Keuka, N.Y., March 12, 1908. This placed him first anywhere in the world as a British subject. Fourth person in the United States.



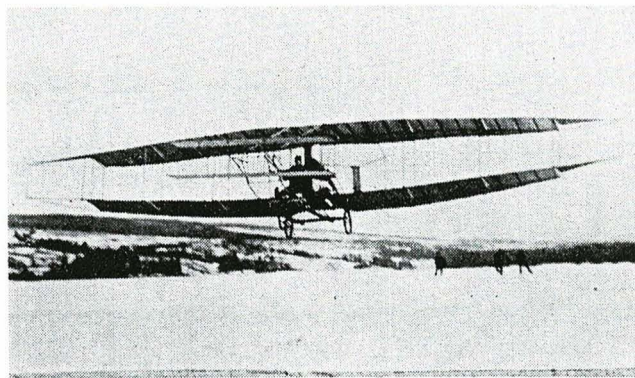
THE RED WING, Casey Baldwin's flying machine, at Hammondsport, New York, before his flight on March 12, 1908.



A. V. ROE with his first airplane at Brooklands, England.



THE AERIAL EXPERIMENT ASSOCIATION, left to right, F. W. Casey Baldwin, Lt. T. Selfridge, Glenn Curtiss, Dr. Alexander Graham Bell and John A. D. McCurdy with their White Wing. On the extreme right, August Post, Aero Club of America secretary.



FIRST FLIGHT IN CANADA is shown here, with McCurdy at the controls of the Silver Dart, on Feb. 23, 1909.

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Club, it was disallowed because only unofficially witnessed.

Actually such a decision seems illogical, because even the first flights of Wilbur and Orville Wright were not witnessed by "officials" of any aero club or similar organization, and if taken in the same category as Roe's flight they, too, would have to be disallowed. So would Casey Baldwin's flight of March 12, 1908, and McCurdy's of May, 1908, as they were not under "official" observation. Even the same thing applies to the flight McCurdy made in Canada on Feb. 23, 1909. Innumerable persons saw him do it, but no Aero Club officials were on hand in that

capacity. The entire subject of first flights seems to have degenerated into a "who can make it sound the best" sort of thing, but the facts do remain, and regardless of official findings, good or bad, actual historical events cannot be distorted.

The fact that A. V. Roe got off the ground in his machine, and actually flew it for some distance, not a hop, but definitely under its own power, is sufficient proof enough that he was the first British subject to make a flight in the British Empire, controlled or otherwise, and what is more he was **the FIRST** individual to fly at any point in the **British Empire**, as he out-dated Cody, and

there was no one else.

Cody was an American, living in England, when he began his first experiments with man-lifting kites. Later he commenced the construction of his man-lifting airplane, and by 1908 had it completed. Most of his early experiments were conducted at Aldershot, and it was there on September 29, 1908, that he accomplished his first flight in an airplane by flying some 78 yards. The exact distance to a foot is not recorded.

On October 14, 1908, he flew his twin-engined, tractor biplane a distance of 200 feet. On January 9, (Continued on page 100)



S. F. CODY, was the second person to fly within the confines of the British Empire, although he was an American citizen at the time. His first flight was at Aldershot, England, September 28, 1908, others being on October 14, 1908, January 9, 1909, and February 22, 1909.



J. A. D. MCCURDY, Canadian, with his flights made at Hammondsport, N.Y., in May, and later, in 1908, predates both Roe and Cody as a pilot, but does not predate them as pilots on flights which were made within the confines of the British Empire. McCurdy was the first pilot to fly at any point in the Dominion of Canada. (February 23, 1909, at Baddeck, Nova Scotia.)

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supply is of considerable value to shipping and air traffic on the North Atlantic as well as to commercial interests on the coast. When the damage done by Hurricane Edna to our Maritime fruit crop alone is considered, such work can be appreciated at its real worth.

This particular B29 had developed a series of snags on its mission and had been diverted to Barbados. There were no objections on the part of its crew who quickly made themselves at home in this hospitable island.

Our last two days were marred by cloudy skies and steady rainfall, and we spent most of our time shopping for the very good bargains in the stores. Normally the rain falls as a sudden downpour and there follows brilliant sunshine. Another of the effects of Hurricane Edna now brewing to the south was to provide us with unusual 50-mph winds which knocked down some of the shacks occupied by the Negroes.

We took off for Bermuda shortly after the B29 which had been sent the required parts to enable it to get back to base. Up in the crew compartment, again with Bob Bowker, we had a front-row seat view with our expert guide pointing out the interesting features of the Leeward Islands which passed beneath our wings.

As we neared Bermuda, the weather deteriorated again thanks to Hazel. We were forced to go around the circuit several times by a large number of B 29 jet tankers which were refuelling F-94's in flight over Bermuda.

We talked briefly with the Bermuda TCA manager, Gil Minorgan, and his wife, who introduced us to W/C E. M. Ware, the Director of Civil Aviation stationed at Bermuda. The knowledgeable wing commander was off with us to Montreal to attend an ICAO meeting and among other things he told us on the flight was how Bermuda was able to build a very fine airport terminal by giving it over to the control of a private corporation. TCA Capt. Joe White took over command of the North Star for an uneventful flight to Montreal which passed over the lights of Boston. Here and in New York, TCA would like to have pick-up rights on their Bermuda service.

Our 2,500-mile flight between Toronto and Barbados was a pleasant feature of our Caribbean holiday. Bowker's Airline particularly provides very congenial fellow passengers, excellent guide and other services, good meals and drinks unmarred by hurricanes or thunderstorms.

FIRST FLIGHTS

(Continued from page 39)

1909, he flew 250 yards, and on February 22, 1909 (the day before McCurdy's first flight in Canada) he made the excellent flying distance of 1,200 feet. He became a world figure in aviation before losing his life in a crash.

The first machine designed and built by the Aerial Experiment Association, a Canadian-formed group, was made in Hammondsport, New York, because that was where Curtiss had his small engine factory, and the motors which powered all four of the machines built were made by Curtiss.

This machine, the Red Wing, was flown by the Canadian, F. W. "Casey" Baldwin, from the ice-covered surface of Lake Keuka, Hammondsport, N.Y., on March 12, 1908. The distance covered was 319 feet. The machine was fitted with runners, not wheels. A second flight of 120 feet resulted in damage to the machine, and work on the second aircraft of the group was then commenced. It was named the White Wing.

Baldwin also flew it on its first flight, a distance of 279 feet, on May 18, 1908. In American aviation records, "Casey" Baldwin is credited with being the fourth man to make an airplane flight in the United States, although this does not mean the FOURTH flight, as a great many individual flights had been accomplished by the Wright Brothers long before Baldwin flew. The three who predate Baldwin in the States are Orville Wright, Wilbur Wright, and William W. Christmas; all three Americans.

The Canadian John McCurdy made his first flight in the White Wing, at Hammondsport, N.Y. The flight took place from the nearby race track on May 23, 1908; the distance flown was 600 feet. He later made many flights in A.E.A. aircraft, and became one of the world's pioneer pilots, particularly by his fine flying in the Silver Dart, fourth and final aircraft built by the A.E.A. group in Hammondsport.

Early in 1909, Dr. Bell had the Silver Dart shipped to Baddeck, Nova Scotia, and there, from the ice-covered surface of Lake Bras d'Or, **Pilot McCurdy made the first flight to be accomplished in an airplane in the Dominion of Canada.** The date was February 23, 1908. He made many subsequent flights in the machine at Baddeck, one covering a distance of 12 miles.

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